

throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, the 1st ERHG called on Mr. Dave Wagner at the Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency, Tyndall AFB, FL, to assist. Dave coordinated between the vendors in the United States and the 1st ERHG.

By February, the hard work paid off as the U.S. Air Force and RED HORSE community stood up the very first Airborne RED HORSE team in Southwest Asia, led by the 819th ERHS. Training began immediately for the team.

"We had an aggressive schedule to meet in order to become operation-capable," said Col Crummett, "but, with the teamwork from AFCAP, AFCESA and our LG community, we were able to meet the demand."

The 819th ERHS ended its six-month deployment in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in March, and the first-ever ARH that had made history just two months earlier handed the reins to the next squadron to continue the mission, the 823rd RHS, just in time to support Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

"The RED HORSE community is again at the leading edge in revolutionizing the way we accomplish airfield repairs," reflected TSgt Jeff Schneberger, 819th ARH crater team chief, "and I'm proud to be a charter member of this team."

To the HORSE ... AIRBORNE!

(Capt Kevin "Ozzie" Osborne, civil engineer project officer, 819th RED HORSE Squadron. Capt Osborne is the Airborne RED HORSE Project Officer.)

AFRL technology benefits airborne firefighters

Surface-to-air missiles suddenly appear against the night sky, screeching from the underbrush below. The UH-1 Huey initiates a hard right bank, but seconds too late as the projectiles slam into the tail rudder. A mayday call is heard on the radio as the helicopter plummets toward earth. Airborne firefighters from the 347th Civil Engineer Squadron at Moody Air Force Base quickly mobilize and arrive on the scene within minutes to witness a fiery blaze engulfing the Huey. Donning their gear, they swiftly reach for the hand line of the newly designed First Response Expeditionary Fire Vehicle, or FRE-Fire.

This was one of many firefighting scenarios held during the first Airborne RED HORSE field training exercise at Avon Park military range in Florida last fall in which FRE-Fire began its technological transition from laboratory testing to real world application.

Developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory Fire Research Group at Tyndall AFB, FL, FRE-Fire combines the Rosenbauer company's ultra high pressure water spray system with a platform designed for the John Deere Military Gator. It is designed to carry both 50 gallons of water and 5 gallons of foam and, using a specially crafted nozzle designed by AFRL,

can deliver a steady stream of water at 1500 psi. It is lightweight and is being designed for airdrop and helicopter sling loading for insertion into austere airfields, giving airborne firefighting teams the ability to provide crash rescue and limited firefighting capability.

"Compact size and high power performance make this vehicle ideal for providing Day One deployment fire protection, bridging the gap between flight line fire extinguishers and crash/rescue fire trucks," said Jennifer Kalberer, project officer at AFRL Fire Research.

AFRL took the initiative in September 2002, working on a design for a small, mobile fire fighting vehicle that could fight 2-D and 3-D hydrocarbon fuel fires. Within one month, the project evolved from the drafting board to the first successful prototype testing, which included modifications recommended by USAF firefighters.

After the first test of the FRE-Fire last fall, CMSgt Tim Seigal, Headquarters Air Combat Command fire protection manager, commented that "fighting fires using JP-8 probably gave the Moody AFB team some of the most realistic training they will ever experience."

"It is imperative that firefighters have the capability to deploy with a light, compact, quick-response fire fighting vehicle," said MSgt Steven Lowell, supervisor of the fire fighting exercises at Avon Park. "The FRE-Fire fits the bill. It is quickly deployable, requires minimal space on the aircraft and will provide airborne firefighters with an excellent first-in limited fire fighting capability."

(Jennifer Kiel, AFRL Fire Research Group)



FRE-Fire vehicle in action during exercises at Avon Park Air Force Range. The FRE-Fire vehicle is designed for use at forward operating locations and for tent city protection. It recently deployed for use in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. (Photo courtesy AFRL)